



TOGETHER WE THRIVE

**Governor's Proposed FY23 Budget Adjustments
Appropriations Hearing
HB 5037 AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June
30th, 2023
Department of Housing
Wednesday, February 16th, 2022**

**Juanita James, President & CEO
Fairfield County's Community Foundation**

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative Dathan, Representative Nolan, Senator Miner, Representative France, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee,

Thank you for hearing my testimony today on House Bill 5037 (AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30th, 2023). I am here to discuss the important investments through the Department of Housing to support efforts to end homelessness and expand affordable housing in Connecticut. My name is Juanita James, and I am the President & CEO of Fairfield County's Community Foundation, which works to close the opportunity gap across Fairfield County.

Fairfield County's Community Foundation works in partnership with the statewide HomeConnecticut Campaign, to foster creation of a range of equitable housing options across Fairfield County. Alongside many other

partners in the state, we know that safe, accessible, and permanent housing is a fundamental element of a sustainable society. When our residents have stable housing, their economic and health outcomes improve. During COVID-19, the need for permanent housing for all of Connecticut's residents was made even more apparent – and important.

Fairfield County's Community Foundation respectfully requests that the committee support the following proposals and expansions from the Governor's budget for the Department of Housing (DOH):

- **We support the preservation of \$100 million bond authorization for the Affordable Housing FLEX Fund and \$50 million bond authorization for the state Housing Trust Fund in the FY 2023 budget.**
- **We support an increase to DOH's Housing/Homeless Services line by at least \$20 million in FY23 to expand the Rental Assistance Program (RAP), including \$2 million to provide rental assistance to 200 scattered-site supportive housing units for highly vulnerable individuals and families.**

Additionally, we support the governor's proposed allocation of \$50 million in American Rescue Plan recovery funds to support the creation of 350 additional housing units affordable to households with incomes between 30% and 50% of area median income.

These proposals will help us meet minimal essential needs for housing in Connecticut – particularly in Fairfield County. For years, Fairfield County's Community Foundation has worked with our communities, municipalities, home builders, and others to improve housing options in our region. Yet foundation support for housing cannot remotely substitute for the systemic improvements needed at the state and local levels in Connecticut.

We sincerely thank the committee for the opportunity to present this testimony, and for your hard work making important and life-saving decisions as we look to shape Connecticut's future beyond the pandemic– it is with your support that we can help make sure Connecticut's residents are healthily and stably housed.

Sincerely,

Juanita James,
President & CEO
Fairfield County's Community Foundation
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